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AUTHOR Home, Alice M.

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ABSTRACT

A study examined the multiple role experiences of 20 adult women studying social work and adult education in 7 programs throughout Canada and the supports available to the women. Also interviewed during the study were two professors and the department head from each program, a field instructor, several program coordinators, and five employers. Role conflict was most pronounced between the women's student and parenting roles. The social work students in traditional schools experienced more role strain and conflict and reported feeling less university support than did both students in adapted schools and students in adult education. Nineteen of the women cited their family as a major source of support. Peer support was also deemed crucial, and 13 women reported receiving some work support. Both professors and department/school directors were very aware of the role-conflict related difficulties faced by female adult students; however, they were not always sure how to respond to the situational, institutional, and dispositional obstacles facing students. Student and faculty perceptions of the kinds of support offered by the university setting were similar. Four of the employers allowed working students some form of leave to resolve role conflict-related problems. (Contains 47 references.) (MN)

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ED 369 909

WOMEN FACING THE MULTIPLE ROLE CHALLENGE

Report submitted to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, Strategic Research Division, Education and Work in a Changing Society Theme Area

FINAL REPORT

ADULT WOMEN STUDYING SOCIAL WORK AND ADULT EDUCATION IN CANADA: A STUDY OF THEIR MULTIPLE ROLE EXPERIENCES AND OF SUPPORTS AVAILABLE TO THEM

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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Alice M. Home, Ph.D.
Professor
École de service social
Université de Montréal
July 15, 1992

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Introduction

Women with family responsibilities are both the fastest growing constituent in universities and in the workplace. They are also the most vulnerable to role strain, yet little is known about the fit between their needs and supports available. Meeting the needs of these non-traditional learners requires the commitment of all stakeholders to providing flexible study opportunities, thereby recognizing that the family, the university and the workplace can no longer be treated as separate worlds (Thomas, 1983; Googins and Bowden, 1987). This national, bilingual, interdisciplinary study was undertaken in an effort to stimulate reflection among students, faculty, employers and professional associations on multiple role women's needs and how best to meet them. Two partners have participated in this research: the Canadian Association of Schools of Social Work (C.A.S.S.W.) and the Canadian Association for the Study of Adult Education (C.A.S.A.E.).

A strategic grant was obtained in the theme area "Education and Work in a Changing Society" in October 1990, to carry out a qualitative study exploring the multiple role experience of women in Canadian social work and adult education programmes. This research also explored supports offered by family, work and university environments. A second goal of this project was to identify key variables and relationships emerging from the interview data, as a basis for a quantitative study of the fit between student need and institutional support.

This report focuses on progress made towards those ends during the grant period as well as on the principal research results. As the dissemination strategy aims at reaching wide and varied user audiences, many results have already been published and further articles are planned for 1992-93. To avoid repetition, this reports presents a summary of major findings, while a publication list and sample articles are available in Appendix 2.

The report begins with a report on work accomplished, including a note on dissemination and the role of partners. This is followed by a summary of the theoretical and methodological framework, a presentation of key findings and implications for policy and practice. Appended to the report are the bibliography, research instruments and sample publications produced by the research team.

Work accomplished during the grant period

Two grants were obtained to develop and carry out this research: a seed money grant (November 1989) and a one-year strategic grant (October 1990). As permission was obtained for a six month extension of the latter grant period, this report covers the work done between December 1989 and March 1992 with an emphasis on the strategic grant period. During the 2 $^1/_2$ year period, the qualitative study was completed and substantial progress was made towards developing the proposed quantitative study.

The seed money period was focused primarily on carrying out an initial literature review, consulting subject experts, identifying key concepts, developing, pre-testing and revising interview guides and developing partnerships. Data collection initiated at that time was completed after the strategic grant had been obtained. Data analysis and interpretaton were key activities of the latter grant period, as was dissemination of results at conferences and through publications. Training graduate students in qualitative research methods was an important part of the work. Two students acted as assistants. Christiane Lemaire, who

holds an M.Ed. in adult education, was involved in data collection and analysis as well as in dissemination of results in 4 presentations and 5 articles. Two articles were prepared as part of her Master's thesis work in the project. The second student, Normand Brodeur, was involved primarily in library research, data analysis and interpretation from September 1991 to March 1992.

This strategic grant was used successfully to produce and disseminate results which explore the fit between multiple role women's needs and institutional responses. However, a second goal was to develop a quantitative research proposal based on both past theory/research and on current practical concerns identified in the research interviews. A number of tasks were accomplished in relation to this goal. First, a pre-survey was completed by directors of most Canadian schools of social work and departments of adult education in order to identify possible sampling and access problems for the planned survey. Secondly, an additional literature review was carried out in 1992 in all relevant data banks (Eric, D.A.I., Sociofile, Social Scisearch, Psychlit) to ensure the most recent theory/ research were available and to identify appropriate research instruments for possible use in the quantitative study. Finally, in keeping with the Council's recommendations (April, 1991), several experts in instrument design and quantitative analysis were consulted to ensure the survey methodology is well designed. As the process of research and instrument design is not yet completed, further information on that aspect will be available in the October 1992 grant application.

Dissemination and the role of partners (CASSW, CASAE)

In keeping with strategic grant priorities on producing results which are useful to policy-makers and users, a dissemination strategy was devised to reach wide and varied audiences. This strategy involved making results available to users as quickly as possible in a variety of oral and written formats, in English and French to both social workers and adult educators. Preliminary data from student interviews were presented at the McGill University Faculty of Education in December 1990 and at the Université de Montréal École de service social in March 1991. Two other bilingual presentations were made at the 1991 Learned Society meetings of the two partner organizations (CASSW, CASAE). Data from faculty interviews were presented in French at the 1992 ACFAS (social work) conference and a research summary was presented to CASSW Women's Caucus members at the 1992 Learned Societies meeting. On all of these occasions, participants were invited to give feedback and suggestions for policy or practice, as well as comment on priorities for further study in the planned quantitative phase.

Student data have been published in a variety of scientific, professional and more popular journals, again in both languages and disciplines. A full list of publications and sample articles is appended to this report; the examples cited here show the range of publications. An article reporting results of student interviews has been published in both languages in a special edition of The Social Worker/Le Travailleur Social on continuing education. This journal is distributed to all 13,000 members of the Canadian Association of Social Workers. A short (2 page) French summary was published in the Fall 1991 edition of Info'Elles, a newsletter-journal distributed to Université de Montréal employees and students. Articles targeting academic and professional groups have been published in Intervention and submitted to the Canadian Journal for the Study of Adult Education.

Partners have played a key role in ensuring results are widely disseminated and that potential users are involved in providing ongoing feedback. CASAE and CASSW facilitated presentation of data at the 1991 Learned Conferences. CASAE invited the author

to give a presentation on the theme of "Celebrating Women in Higher and Adult Education" at the same conference. CASSW arranged for the author to meet student representatives of a mothers' group at Carleton School of Social Work, and facilitated a feedback session at the 1992 Women's Caucus Meeting. Further dissemination/feedback to members of the two partner associations is planned in the fall of 1992 through the use of the newsletters. An article will be submitted to the CASSW journal (Canadian Social Work Review).

Partners were instrumental in ensuring a high response rate to the pre-survey, through their provision of accompanying letters of support. Individual members of both associations provided theoretical and methodological advice when the project was at the planning stage, and CASAE members offered valuable consultation around revising the October 1990 grant application for the 1992 competition. CASSW also provided the author access to social work schools' self-study reports, as well as covering some translation costs. Both associations hope to continue their participation in the quantitative project because of its potential to provide more precise data which could influence educational policy and practice.

Theoretical Framework

Professionals must become lifelong learners if they wish to remain competent in a rapidly changing world, but they cannot do so without adequate support (Houle, 1980; Kidd, 1980). Yet there is little research linking social science theory on multiple roles to adult education literature on students' needs and university responsiveness. Multiple role research focuses on worker-parents rather than on students and it emphasizes statistical relationships rather than quality of experience in different roles and combinations (Dyk, 1987; Hirsch & Rapkin, 1986). Adult education research describes student characteristics (Schütze, 1987) barriers to participation (Cross, 1981; Blais et al., 1989) and adaptations in programmes, schedules, services or teaching styles (Miller, 1989). Some studies describe family support (Hobfoll, 1986) but there is little available on workplace support. A few Canadian studies focus on the fit between adults' needs and university response (Skelhorne, 1975; Spears & Potter, 1987) or describe specific programme adaptations (Callahan & Wharf, 1989).

The theoretical framework is organized around two main dimensions : the multiple role experience and supports available. The multiple role experience includes students' actual role situation (number and combinations of roles, commitments and demands related to each role) and the extent to which that situation is perceived as being one of role strain. Role strain is a felt difficulty in meeting role demands; it includes role overload (time constraints) and role conflict due to simultaneous conflicting demands (Goode, 1960; Coverman, 1989). While multiple roles can be enriching (Sieber, 1974), most students experience strain due to time and resource constraints and difficulty balancing work, family and academic demands (Warshal & Southern, 1986). Role contagion can result when strain in one role affects performance in another (Hirsch and Rapkin, 1986). Intensity of role demands can vary with number of hours committed to family work, paid work and study. Work demands reflect overtime requirements and flexibility of work time, while student demands can vary with both level and stage (coursework, thesis) of study. Family demands include numbers, age and special needs of dependents. Existing research suggests a link between actual role situation and role strain. Role combinations involving parenting add role strain for women, who bear primary family responsibilities yet have trouble bargaining due to low power (Barnett & Baruch 1985; Bentell and O'Hare, 1986). Employed mothers who focus on family roles report high strain if family support is low (Zambrana & Frith, 1988) while those prioritizing other roles experience strain if their husbands disagree with their choice (VanMeter & Agronow, 1982). Role conflict occurs especially when parenting

demands are strong or inflexible and work commitment is strong (Areshenel & Pearlin, 1987; Froberg et al. 1986).

Affective and instrumental **support** can reduce the impact of role strain, as students with support systems report less role conflict (Menks & Tupper, 1987; Dyk, 1987). The nuclear and extended family is a primary source of support (Hobfoll, 1986) but women students receive less support from their spouses than do men (Houstonhobourg & Strange, 1986; Bolger et al., 1989). University affective support varies with mission and size but adult students see the university as less tolerant and supportive than do younger students (Kuh & Sturgis, 1980). Universities range from removing constraints on adults' participation, through separate but lower status programmes for adults to integrating adaptations into regular programmes (Ackell et al., 1982). Instrumental supports include flexible schedules, programmes, admission and administrative procedures as well as student services geared to adults' needs and timetables (Coats, 1989; Cross & McCartan, 1984). Faculty helpfulness, expressed in a flexible, understanding response to multiple role students' needs, is a strong predictor of adult student satisfaction (Kirk & Dorfman, 1983). Respecting adults' experience, offering pragmatic content and ensuring student participation can be helpful. Although professors perceive adults differently from pre-adults, it is not clear if they alter their teaching style for older students (Gorham, 1985; Baker and Wilburn, 1980).

The workplace is beginning to recognize that employees need help balancing family and work roles (Skrzycki, 1990) but support for continuing study varies widely. Workplace support can include a positive attitude, flexible hours, unpaid leave, rewards upon completion or direct financial support (paid leave, reimbursing tuition). Paid leave tends to be granted at the pleasure of the employer (Thomas, 1983), men receive such leave more often than women (Spears & Potter, 1987) and those receiving paid leave report less fatigue and stress (Bélanger et al., 1985). Increasing numbers of workers are seeking credit for learning even though many organizations support only in-house education controlled by the employer (Scanlan and Darkenwald, 1984).

Multiple role students encounter **obstacles** which can discourage them from enrolling or lead to dropping out. Institutional obstacles (inflexible locations, schedules or programmes) and workplace obstacles (lack of tangible recognition for achievement) can discourage worker-students (Blais et al., 1989). Dispositional obstacles leave some adults feeling insecure about their abilities and skills, while others face various difficulties related to their work, family or financial situation (Cross, 1981; Long, 1983; Iovacchini et al., 1985; Coats, 1989). Financial obstacles such as lack of grants or loans can cause stress for students (Kirk and Dorfman, 1983). Students' ability to surmount these obstacles can be influenced by their coping strategies, which may allow them to control the effects of both the stressful situation they face and their own reactions to that situation (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Effective strategies are needed particularly when individuals are faced with a new or problematic situation which challenges their usual methods of coping. Hall (1960 cited in Bentall & O'Hare, 1987) identifies 3 types of coping strategies. Structural role redefinition involves negotiating a change in others' role expectations, while personal role redefinition leads to adoption of more realistic self-expectations. Finally, reactive role behaviour is an attempt to meet one's own and others' expectations in spite of the strain involved. The choice of a given strategy depends on individual and situational characteristics as well as an assessment of the demands being made (Gilbert & Holahan, 1982; Bentell & O'Hare, 1987).

Methodology

An exploratory research **design** was used because of its utility in clarifying concepts and exploring possible relationships between variables (Tripodi, 1985). Miles & Huberman's (1984) qualitative approach chosen was used to bound and reduce data in this multiple site study. A purposive sampling strategy was used to select schools and departments as well as particular respondents. Contrast sampling was designed to ensure diversity, with a view to identifying common patterns as well as variations on key dimensions (Patton, 1982). The seven sampled departments are located in cities of varying sizes in three Canadian regions, involve different degrees of adaptation to an adult clientele and include both English and French programmes. The **sample** included 4 schools of social work and 3 departments of adult education. Two of the universities had both types of departments, which allowed examination of disciplinary/professional influence while partially controlling the university climate. Contrast sampling of students was designed to permit diversity in age, role combination, parent, student and employee status, ethnic background, type and intensity of role demands, ease in coping with multiple roles. However, all students shared being women aged 25 or over, who had spent at least two years outside an educational institution, who were enrolled in adult education or social work, had parenting responsibilites and were employed at least 9 hours a week. Professors and student representatives in each department were asked to approach two or three students about an interview.

Two professors and the department head (school director) were interviewed in each of the seven programmes. Contrast sampling of faculty ensured inclusion of female and male professors with different ranks, ages and life situations, who had varying work responsibilities and teaching philosophies. A field instructor and several programme coordinators were interviewed as were some professors involved in distance or satellite programmes. Five employers selected from two regions were interviewed about the educational policies and practices of their organizations. These employers worked in governmental, community and industrial organizations of various sizes, which employed either social workers or adult educators.

Interview guides were developed for each type of actor, based on the literature and the material obtained from consultation. All instruments were pre-tested by two researchers in both languages to ensure clarity and relevance. All interviews were tape recorded, except for one long-distance telephone interview and one in which notes were taken in lieu of taping, at the respondent's request. Written consents were signed prior to the interviews. Copies of the consent form and interview guides are appended to this report.

While the 45 transcribed interviews are the principal source of data in this study, complementary data were collected in the form of programme descriptions and some self-study reports. The availability of several types of data and the involvement of two researchers in data analysis allowed for some triangulation (Denzin, 1978).

Data analysis involved coding interviews and documents by theme, in preparation for descriptive classification, analysis and interpretation. Coding schemes were generated for each type of actor, using the intercoder comparison procedure suggested by Miles and Huberman (1984) to ensure adequate validity and reliability. Two researchers, working independently, developed preliminary descriptive theme codes based on the theoretical framework and on initial reading of a small sample of interviews. Comparison of codes led to keeping and refining those both had identified, while revising, adding or

rejecting others. The two researchers coded several interviews using the preliminary scheme so that coding differences and difficulties could be discussed. Revisions were made on the basis of the relevance and clarity of each code. At least three versions of each coding scheme were developed before reaching the final one. Subsequent coding was done by one researcher, then checked by the other with discussion of areas of uncertainty. The Ethnograph qualitative analysis computer programme was used to enter codes, then sort and arrange data for subsequent display. The researchers created data display tables (Miles and Huberman, 1984) to reduce and group data descriptively by theme for each actor.

Subsequent analysis focused on describing and interpreting data in the light of theory. This process also involved looking at differences between respondents in adult education and social work programmes, those of English or French background, and those in adapted or more traditional programmes. For the purposes of this research, only those departments/schools which integrate several specific programme and/or administrative adaptations into their regular offerings were considered as adapted (Ackell et al. 1982). This meant only three departments (two social work, one adult education) were classified as adapted. These departments/schools offered not only the possibility of completing the degree on a part-time basis, but also distance or satellite programmes, as well as credits for prior learning or outreach for special groups.

FINDINGS

This section presents the major findings of the study. A brief summary of student data is presented first, and readers are referred to the articles in Appendix 2 for more detailed information. Findings from the 13 interviews with faculty are then presented, followed by those derived from interviews with the 7 department/school directors along with a summary of the pre-survey results. Some data from written programme materials are included to complement the latter interview data. Finally, employer interview data are presented.

Multiple Role Students' Perceptions

Of the twenty students, nearly two-thirds studied on a part-time basis. All seven full-time students were in social work programmes. The latter had adolescent or young adult children, except those for a few who were obliged to study full-time, despite caring for young families, in order to qualify for financial aid. The "choice" of work or student status was not freely made but rather conditioned by financial or family obligations which either precluded or prescribed full time study. Study decisions were thus made — and changed — in response to shifting family and work demands, with the result that the student role often had lowest priority.

Thirteen of the women were in social work while seven studied adult education. The former were equally divided between undergraduate and graduate levels while the latter were at the Master's level or in post-degree diplomas. Twelve were English-speaking and eight were French-speaking; three of the latter were immigrants of varying ethnic backgrounds while there was one Canadian-born Black English-speaking student.

Women reported strong, inflexible demands from young children and other family members who had special needs. Consistent with the literature (Areshenel and Pearlin,

1987; Froberg et al., 1986), these women and those working full-time reported more role strain. However, all of these students who had not dropped out found the multiple role experience both stressful and enriching (Sieber 1974; Goode, 1960). Benefits included increased confidence, new perspectives on family, new time management and organizational skills and some practical advantages such as new skills at work, a change in salary or job. In addition, some families became, of necessity, more autonomous. These benefits did not come without a price, however. There was no time for relaxation, for enjoying family life or for socializing with friends. For part-time students, this state of affairs was endless. As one student put it, it was like "leaving the dishes overnight, knowing you had to do them in the morning, except it was three years long".

Role conflict was most pronounced between student and parenting roles, both of which demand constant availability and have uncontrollable schedules. While some women reported constant stress ("you're always playing catch-up"), most experienced conflict as periodic flare-ups when demands from one role temporarily increased and no negotiation was possible. Several women described having family illnesses or crises happening on the day of an exam or seminar presentation, or just before a term paper or work deadline. Work demands were easier to manage for many women, because the hours were predictable. Those with managerial and professional positions had more difficulty with overtime and deadlines, even though more workplace support was available to them.

Social work students reported more role strain, conflict and contagion, probably because more of these women study full-time or because social work programmes are less flexible due to field placements. Social work students in traditional schools reported less university support than both those in adapted schools and students in adult education. Support may therefore have buffered stress for some of the students, consistent with the findings of Menks and Tupper (1987) and Dyk (1987). In addition, adult education students were more realistic in their self-expectations, using a wider variety of coping strategies including role bargaining and temporarily segregating one or more roles (Lemaire, 1992).

Support from a variety of sources helped those women cope. As student perceptions of university support will be compared later with professors' perceptions, this section deals only with family, peer and work support. Family was a major source of support for 19 of the 20 women; the other woman was an immigrant with no family in Canada. This confirms Hobfoll's (1986) findings regarding the importance of nuclear and extended family as a source of support. Both affective and instrumental support were provided; the former was proportionately more prominent for adult education students. It included recognizing the importance of the educational programme, providing encouragement and showing pride. Instrumental support ranged from providing child care to financial help or teaching word processing skills, and partner's roles involved those who "helped if I asked" but also some who were left "holding the fort".

Peer support was crucial, both from women studying in similar circumstances (who provided empathy and practical resource sharing) and from some understanding friends who looked after children in emergencies and generally encouraged these multiple role (MR) students not to give up. Support from old friends was especially needed because others did not understand these women's new lack of availability.

Some work support was reported by 13 of the 20 students. This included affective support such as being encouraged or respected by colleagues as well as instrumental help in the form of flexible work hours, unpaid leave, reimbursement of some expenses, use of office computers or help from librarians in doing research. However, none

of the 20 women benefitted from paid leave, which is not surprising given the results of other studies (Spears and Potters, 1987) and Canada's lack of a skill development leave policy (Thomas, 1983). Only a few women in higher status full-time jobs reported strong support. The relatively low work support may reflect many women's precarious employment status, in low responsibility, low paying jobs. It may also reflect limited value placed on university learning in some settings, where women were teased about being "petit bourgeois" or about their hectic pace ("blink and she's disappeared"), or were told their learning activities made them less committed to work. A few were also bothered by such practical obstacles as overly rigid hours, but in general, work was seen neither as a source of major obstacles nor as an important source of support.

These multiple role students encountered a number of other **obstacles**, however. Family obstacles included some partners who were less than enthusiastic or did not share domestic work, children whose noisy, demanding presence made study difficult and parents who had no confidence in their daughters' ability to perservere. A number of women encountered dispositional obstacles (Cross, 1981) such as rusty study skills, lack of confidence or difficulty in asserting themselves. Quite a few mentioned sociocultural obstacles. These included societal lack of interest in multiple role women, as expressed in blaming attitudes towards mothers, lack of appropriate child care, financial help and housing. Immigrant and visible minority women ran into racial and linguistic discrimination as well as cultural stereotyping. Financial obstacles were central for many social work students, especially single mothers for whom a broken washing machine or an unexpected bill spelt disaster. With no financial cushion, many expended much energy "scraping money together".

The students had a lot to say about university support and the lack of it. Adult education and social work students agreed there was a lack of "institutional support for multiple role students" because of a lingering image of the ideal student: young, male and full-time. On a campus level, there are rarely centres for mature students and student services (libraries, counselling, financial aid) are not adapted for multiple role students' timetables or needs. Social work students mentioned more obstacles both at the university and the departmental levels. Problems included rigidity in programmes, teaching styles, and faculty attitudes (perception of MR students as marginal or incompetent). The student data suggest that andragogical principles and philosophy do seem permeate everyday life in adult education departments, even where they are located in traditional universities.

Both social work and adult education students noted that certain adaptations made for adults who hold paid jobs don't necessarily help multiple role women. For example, late afternoon and evening courses are difficult for mothers who may not have a partner to share child care. Intensive sessions were sometimes scheduled at busy times for mothers (beginning of school year) and some distance education programmes did not provide any way to meet others and overcome isolation.

Faculty Perception of Multiple Role Students

The results reported here have not yet been published, though several articles are planned for 1992-93. This section presents findings on professors' perceptions of multiple role students, supports and obstacles they encounter at the university, and faculty attempts to meet their needs. Most of the data are derived from interviews with 13 professors; however some student and director data are introduced for comparative purposes. The sample included 8 social work professors and 5 from adult education. Nine were English, 4 were French. None were from non-white ethnic groups but one had a disability. Nine of the professors were women. Although there is a higher proportion of female faculty in social work and education than in many university departments, women were overpresented in this sample. In 1990-91, only one director was female; if this research were to be repeated today, four of the seven directors would be women. Five of the professors worked in departments classified as "adapted" because of their offering distance or satellite courses as part of regular programming and because of special admission/administrative arrangements.

Professors' perceptions of multiple role students were analysed to identify any patterns regarding traditional or adapted programmes, those offered in English or French and professional/disciplinary focus. There were few English/French differences, except that the latter tended to be more aware of society's responsibility. There were no noticable differences in the number of positive or negative comments about multiple role students. However, there were some differences among the groups regarding teaching implications. Adult education professors were more aware of the adjustments needed to teach these students effectively, and those in adapted departments/schools emphasized the positive impact of having multiple role students in the classroom.

The professors identified three main **strengths** in multiple role students: their motivation, their life/work experience and skills. Sixty percent saw these women as highly motivated, goal-directed students, eager to learn and "determined to succeed despite the obstacles". The same percentage noted that as these students have experienced life and work problems, they can draw on their experience to understand clients' situations and difficulties. Three of the department directors spoke of this life/work experience as a valued resource for the profession or the department. As one professor put it: "there is no one professor who can equal in his or her own competence... the shared collective experience of these students". This same experience gives them a practical, realistic perspective which is helpful both to them and to their less mature fellow students. Finally, 4 professors and one director mentioned that many of these women had developed excellent coping strategies and that single mothers facing the greatest obstacles were often "tops" in performance and commitment. The strengths of multiple role students, as perceived by faculty, reflects several themes of the adult education literature; especially the value of life/work experience, adults' high motivation and their capacity for self-direction (Knowles, 1976).

However, both professors and department/school directors were very aware of the **difficulties** these students face. Three main problems were noted by the professors: time contraints, role conflict and contagion and working under unfavourable learning conditions. Five professors noted that these women allocate only the time required to attend classes, perhaps beacause they are limited by day care or work hours. Often, the times they are able to study (late evening when children are asleep) are not prime time for learning. All the professors agreed that the extreme time contraints brought on by multiple role responsibilities caused problems. Sixty percent lamented that these women had great difficulty making their education a priority because of their other commitments:

"They operate on the squeaky wheel principle"

"Multiple role women are spread so thin"

A second major area of difficulty is conflict between family and student roles, noted by half the professors. Conflict occurs when children are ill, contagion is evident when their minds seem elsewhere or they can't concentrate in class, and many find it difficult to move rapidly from their parent to their student role. Controlling family demands and negotiating writing/studying time is not easy for these women, noted by Barnett & Baruch (1985). As one professor pointed out: "the world assumes they have a licence to demand these women adjust their time to them".

The perceptions of professors and students are quite similar regarding the time constraints, contagion, conflict and feeling of being marginal. Students described their lives as a constant juggling act, and it was clear they had to make their studies fit in as best they could. Role strain, in the form of role overload, conflict and contagion was noted by both students and faculty as well as being identified in the literature (Warshal & Southern, 1986).

Several professors and 6 of the 7 directors noted the impact of these unfavourable learning conditions on multiple role students. These women are too busy to get involved in campus life and they feel marginal even when mature women are the majority in the department. Part-time students, those who must interrupt their studies and those studying at a distance can sometimes get lost in the system or even drop out. Several professors wish these students were in better learning situations. As one said: "My heart goes out to people who have to stretch this experience out for years and years".

While most faculty feel respect and concern for multiple role students, they are not always sure how to respond to them (Gorham, 1985). On the one hand, "these are the valued students"; half the professors found them stimulating yet easy to teach, because of their maturity and their ability to relate theory to practice. Many social agencies prefer these mature students for field placements. As one professor put it: "when it works, everyone benefits". But it doesn't always work well; over half the professors found teaching these women was difficult. The very goal-directedness which makes many of these students autonomous means that they can be quite demanding. They are not always prepared to follow the instructor's agenda, they want specific practical content, they want to be treated as colleagues and they ask for special treatment such as handing assignments in late or getting credit for prior learning. They have trouble scheduling group projects and it is not always easy teaching them in classes which also include traditional age students, as each has stereotypes of the other age group.

These students are seen as facing a variety of situational, institutional and dispositional **obstacles** during their learning endeavours (Cross, 1981). According to both professors and directors, situational obstacles cause the most difficulty, particularly those related to financial and family issues. Nearly 70% of the professors and over half the directors noted the financial obstacles faced by multiple role students, because of restricted access to loans and grants (especially for part-time students) difficulties in getting paid leave and the high cost of study (tuition, computer, books, day care, transportation, housing). About half the professors and directors found that obstacles occur when family members fail to realize the time constraints study will impose and are unable or unwilling to adjust their demands. The lack of accessible, affordable day care increases family obstacles. It is noteworthy that there was little mention of obstacles produced by work commitments, other than indirect references to time and financial constraints. These data are similar to those

supplied by students, who felt the work world was neither a source of strong support nor a cause of major problems.

Institutional obstacles were the second source of difficulty, cited by 45% of both professors and directors. The professors noted that university norms and statutes are designed for young students for whom studying is the central role. There is a lack of commitment to other students, who are expected to find ways to conform to the usual rules. Limited political commitment is matched by lack of financial support for the development of adapted programmes and policies (distance education, part-time study extended time frames for study completion, satellite centres, recognition of past learning). As a result, these students often feel marginal and their nonconformity to university norms always has to be explained.

Dispositional obstacles are the third type of difficulty, mentioned by about $^1/_3$ of the professors and nearly half the directors. These students may have weak study or writing skills, or may lack confidence in their abilities. Sometimes, they do not realize how difficult it will be to manage the demands of the student role in addition to their other responsibilities. They run from one pressing demand to the next without adequate planning: "A lot of people come in with the idea that this will work just fine, they can just go to school and be with their family and work or whatever"...

Some students in distance programmes, which do not have specific course timetables, lack the autonomy or self-discipline needed to manage their time. It is ironic in some of the most adapted programmes there is a 50% dropout rate, probably because it is too hard to "do it all", to keep up the energy and motivation over a period of several years. These programmes appear easier but as one director said: "students find it far more difficult than they ever imagined it was going to be".

There seems to be an interaction between stituational and dispositional obstacles, according to students and faculty. The very services designed to help students develop study skills, handle stress or manage time are often inaccessible to these students. They are too overloaded to take advantage of these services, which are often scheduled at times that these women are not available.

A key area of interest in this study was the perception of support offered by the university setting. Student and faculty perceptions of the kinds of support provided by individual professors, schools/departments and the larger university were quite similar. They are presented in table 1, to facilitate comparison and shorten the accompanying text.

TABLE 1

STUDENT AND FACULTY PERCEPTIONS OF UNIVERSITY SUPPORT

SOURCE OF SUPPORT	STUDENTS (N=20)	FACULTY (N=13)
Individual professors	Understanding MR situation and importance of other roles - respecting their maturity, autonomy, experience - encouraging them to meet challenge with support, feedback Flexibility around deadlines, missed classes etc. when family crises occur.	Understanding that "being a student doesn't stop life" - valuing experience while recognizing need for support - admiring them: "I haven't a clue how they do it" Flexibility (forgiving deadlines, missed classes, offering several assignment options, giving out photocopies). Commitment of scarce time/energy for individual help, outreach, advocacy.
School or department	Recognizing school is " only one part of my life". Offer tangible adaptations (credit for prior learning, flexible hours, distance or satellite-based education, part-time study)	Some schools/depts see MR students as central or as important as traditional-aged students. Commitment through defending individual students or non-traditional programmes, despite low institutional support.
University	Some informal flexibility in interpreting policies/rules. Some special services (housing, day care, telephone registration, financial help).	Some universities offer flexible programmes (distance etc.) or policies (extra time to complete degree). Some offer adapted services (day care, housing, oreintation booklet, writing skills, special student networks).

Three quarters of the professors interviewed recognized that while multiple role students have many strengths, they are also more vulnerable and therefore need special **support**. This meant having an understanding attitude plus making special arrangements both inside and outside the classroom. Recognizing and responding to these students' special needs was most prominent among adult education professors and those social work faculty working in adapted schools.

An understanding attitude, recognizing that these women "are juggling an awful lot" was the basis for responding appropriately, according to 75% of the professors and 60% of the students. Women professors who were also mothers were seen by both students and professors to have an easier time because they "have been there". One professor expressed her amazement that these women managed to attend class or get assignments done, given all they had to contend with:

> I look around the classroom and I think "how many lunches did you make and how many beds and how many messes did you clean up and how many fights did you adjudicate"... so I look out sometimes at their faces and I think, "boy that's really something that you are here!"

Supporting these students required flexibility, such as making allowances for family crises without sacrificing rigour or fairness and structuring in support mechanisms (peer helping, group project time) within class hours to allow for students' severe time contraints. A smaller number of professors went the extra distance by commiting scarce personal work time and energy to advocating on behalf of individual students or "luxury" outreach programmes, or by giving extra time to individual students for tutorials, thesis supervision or counselling:

> We have fought a great many battles on behalf of individuals trying to get extensions on their theses, trying to get them reinstated after their time has elapsed, trying to get money for them.

Some of these faculty sat on affirmative action committees, worked on ways to give credit for prior learning, or were part of working groups designing outreach or distance programmes. They did this out of a strong commitment to non-traditional students, even though they rarely got support or recognition for their efforts from the larger university system:

> Unless you are an elite programme creaming off, you want students that understand the life conditions of clients, many of whom are poor or disabled or single mothers... so you need to adapt your admissions criteria and your programmes to reach out to those populations.

This type of advocacy stance was characteristic of all adult education departments, though those in traditional universities had to expend more energy on it due to lack of institutional commitment. Almost all adult education professors showed high commitment. Social work professors in an adapted, supportive university were also strongly involved in advocacy along with one school which showed enormous departemental commitment to outreach despite institutional indifference. In most schools located in traditional universities, some individual professors were highly supportive, but according to directors and students, there was considerable variation among professors and no coherent policy. A professor in one such school admitted that the few adpatations were made not out of ideological

commitment but because of competition with other universities: "That forced us to adapt — otherwise we wouldn't have done anything".

At first glance, it is difficult to understand the contradiction between many professors' high sensitivity to multiple needs women's needs and their lack of action to change these students' situations. However, as one professor pointed out: "any major change requires someone to be dedicated to it and give it lots of time". An examination of the professors' own work roles and of the reward system within the university sheds some light on this issue.

Nearly 40% of the professors felt conflicts between these students' special needs and other pressures. For example, some professors wanted to give good marks to mature students, who had made enormous progress but whose final performance was still weaker than younger students who "breezed through without working". Others were unsure whether to push their multiple role students to finish their degrees quickly or to try to reduce their marginality by involving them in campus life. Several professors tried to be flexible regarding late assignments but feared criticisms of injustice from other students. A few felt frustrated when women with excellent work experience were not admitted to the programme because of rigid university academic norms. One professor summed it up: "you're caught between really understanding and not being able to totally respond".

A second obstacle to responsiveness lies in the faculty's own multiple role situation. The professorial role is by definition a multiple one, because faculty are expected to teach, do research and participate in community service or university/professional committees. However, the reward structure of most universities — and especially the traditional ones — favours research productivity over teaching and gives lowest priority to the service component. This hierarchy is often vigourously denied in public declarations by university officials but is well known by professors and students. Devoting time and energy to adapting teaching methods, developing outreach programmes or helping individual students means that time is not available for research. One may get personal satisfaction out of these activities, but "there's no return on it as far as promotion and tenure are concerned. No one cares that you have done these things". An added problem for professors who teach undergraduate courses is the size of their classes. As classes of 20 are considered uneconomical, many instructors try in vain to apply adult education principles and to be flexible in courses accommodating 50 to 150 students.

The frustration of not being able to "totally respond" is greater for professors who are parents themselves. While they are extra sensitive to multiple role students' needs, offering intensive courses or after hours graduate supervision would mean neglecting their own families' needs. In addition, these multiple role professors can suffer negative career consequences for devoting work time to undervalued activities. Unlike some faculty who can do their research outside of working hours, multiple role professors must choose between normal career advancement (based on high research productivity) and high commitment to teaching and advocacy activities.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the professors interviewed for this study expressed a diversity of views on university support offered to MR students. They noted that students appreciated flexibility, were proud to succeed despite difficult circumstances or were grateful for programmes which gave them access to an education. Nevertheless, MR students are beginning to demand help to overcome the isolation and marginality that are side effects of distance and part-time programmes. Even though such programmes give them some control over the pace of learning, it remains hard to combine studying, parenting and

working. Students in all types of programmes continue to feel misunderstood and unsupported, despite "pockets of understanding". In the words of one professor, they sense that their department/school "bows more to the wind of university regulations than to the breeze of student need".

Four of the 7 departmental/school directors expressed some satisfaction around adaptations made for multiple role students, especially the progress towards increasing access for nontraditional students. However, one noted that the highly accessible distance programme offered in his department is still demanding for those with difficult life situations:

> I think we have gone a long way to make it accessible and flexible; but on the other hand, I look at their lives and even given that they don't have enough room to do it.

Several directors pointed out that multiple role students have such specific individual life situations that it is difficult to accommodate everyone's needs in any one programme adaptation. Apart from the problems evening courses cause for mothers, scheduling field placements which combine maximal learning and reasonable convenience is a great challenge.

There was a difference between the views of social work professors in traditional programmes and those in adapted programmes. The former simply recognized the limits of their schools' responses to MR students by stating "we don't have a great deal to offer them". Social work professors in adapted schools were more like adult education professors in their explicit desire to do more:

> We have done a little bit... but we could be a lot better in making our programme a conducive place for working moms with kids or moms going back to school... Our school still wasn't designed for them.

When asked how to increase support for multiple role students, both directors and professors emphasized the need for more flexibility and more material support. On a departmental level, there is a need for more recognition of prior learning, access to part-time and distance study, flexible scheduling. On a university-wide level more time is needed to complete degrees, students should be able to switch back and forth between full and part-time study. The university also needs to provide more loans and scholarships, family housing and day care. Lastly, both professors and directors felt that academic and personal support needed to be made more accessible and adapted to these special needs students. Setting up formal peer helping networks, providing orientation sessions and naming an advisor specially for MR students were suggestions made.

Supporting multiple role students: The directors' views

Some of the views of the 7 directors have been presented in the foregoing discussion of professors' responses. However, much of the interview with directors focused on their school/department's attempts to adapt to the changing student body, as well as on obstacles they encountered. Directors were also asked to outline specific policies and programmes developed to support MR students. While directors were the primary source of data regarding adaptations in policies and practices, some professors coordinating special programmes were interviewed briefly to obtain further detail. Two other sources of data were used to enrich and complete the interview material. Programme descriptions were obtained for the 7 sampled schools/departments and recent self-study reports were analysed when available. Finally, a pre-survey was sent to all CASSW accredited schools of social work and to all departments of adults education. This was done to collect broader Canadian data both on changes in social work and adult education student bodies and on some institutional programme and policy responses. A second objective was to identify sampling and access issues as well as possible solutions for the proposed quantitative study; the latter data will be discussed in the October 1992 grant application.

The Changing Student Population

The data from both professors and directors suggest a general rise in the age of students, although some programmes designed for adults are now attracting younger students. The mean student age usually varies between 29 and 37; however, some regular undergraduate programmes continue to be made up primarily of traditional aged students. Women form between 65% and 82% of the student population. Most have at least two roles; they are either working or mothering while studying. Although older and returning students tend to be female, this increase in multiple role women was observed also among younger undergraduate students.

Five of the 7 directors noted that the majority of their students were involved in the labour force, at least on a part-time basis. The increase in the numbers of working students has blurred the distinction between part and full-time study; some schools/departments have large numbers of part-time students while others see more mature women studying full-time to complete their degrees quickly. Students respond to changing role demands by switching back and forth from part to full-time study. Certain schools and departments noted other specific changes in their student body. Several social work schools pointed to an increase in the number of mothers and especially single mothers, while others found more of their students came from economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

These data suggest that this sample probably reflects general trends in other Canadian departments/schools. The general age and sex distribution is similar to that being observed in other North American universities, where there is a general increase in female participation, and where the age of the average student is rising sharply (Schütze, 1987). This suggests that there will be increasing numbers of multiple role students in the future. The difficulties experienced by students participating in this study and by faculty who teach them will undoubtedly be more widespread as we approach the 21st century.

Findings Regarding Adaptations for Non-Traditional Students

The following section presents data from the mini survey. Twenty-eight of the questionnaires were returned, for an overall response rate of 84% (80% in social work, 88% in adult education). The high response rate is in part due to the cooperation of partners (CASSW, CASAE) who sent a letter urging departmental directors to reply. It also shows that both the current study and the proposed quantitative survey are seen as relevant by a very high proportion of the target school/department population.

Seventy-one percent of the respondents indicated they offered an undergraduate degree and nearly 80% had a Master's degree. In addition, nearly 40% offered a certificate or diploma at the undergraduate level while 18% had a similar option of the Master's level. Most adult education departments offer primarily graduate level programmes, while social work schools usually offer both levels of study.

Respondents were asked to identify whether various adaptations were available in their schools or departments. These adaptations were then examined as to whether they were found primarily in social work or adult education, at which level and whether they were available as part of a regular programme (see Table 2). Ackell et al (1982) placed universities in three categories: those which removed only the most obvious barriers to adult participation, those which had specific adaptations of lesser prestige and those which integrated adaptations for adults into regular programming.

TABLE 2 :

Schools/departments (N=28) adaptations for non-traditional students

part-time	adapted schedules	intensive courses	distance/satellite	adapted admissions
N = 24	N = 21	N = 20	N = 14	N = 13
85%	75%	71%	50%	46%

Most schools of social work and adult education departments offer some form of adaptation in response to non-traditional students and two-thirds of these programmes were set up specially for adult students. Part-time study and adapted schedules (such as evening courses) are offered in over $^3/_4$ of the universities, and available in regular undergraduate or graduate courses $^2/_3$ of the time. This is not surprising, as these are the least disruptive or expensive adaptations from the universities' point of view, well as having the longest tradition. Intensive courses, often offered on campus, are available at 71% of the schools or departments. This type of adaptation represents some inconvenience for the university (finding classrooms) and for faculty with family responsibilities, but the financial and time investment is relatively low. Distance education and satellite centres, if they are to work well, are costly to set up and require assistance of specialized personnel as well as special technical arrangements. The relative proportion of both financial and time cost borne by the

university being higher, it is not surprising that only 50% of the departments have these offerings. Finally, adapted admissions are available only in 46% of the departments, which probably reflects the time investment required to set up and administer credit for prior learning schemes. Only 60% of the intensive, distance/satellite courses and adapted admissions options are offered in regular degree programmes.

In Ackell's et al's (1982) terms, a high proportion of schools/departments did remove the full-time, regular schedule barrier to participation in both regular degree and certificate/diploma programmes. However, the more substantial adaptations were offered less often (in an average of 55% of the programmes), and these intensive, distance and admissions adaptation were available only 61% of the time in the regular degree programmes. These data suggest that most of these schools/departments have made either minimal or moderate adaptations. The classification of the 7 sampled programmes supports this tentative conclusion: only 3 (43%) were considered highly adapted. As an effort was made to seek out these 3 programmes, the total percentage of Canadian schools/departments which are highly adapted is probably closer to one-third.

Cross tabulations were carried out to check on possible associations between type of department/school and presence of 5 types of adaptations. Results (Fisher's exact test) showed significant relationships between department type (social work or adult education) and presence of three adaptations: intensive courses ($p \leq .02$), distance education ($p \leq .04$) and adapted admission criteria ($p \leq .02$). All of the relationships went in the same direction: adult education departments were more likely to offer these adaptations than were schools of social work. Eighty-seven percent of the adult education programmes provided distance education compared with $^1/_3$ of the social work schools, and only 15% of the latter offered intensive sessions compared to 63% of adult education departments. Over 87% of adult education departments had admissions criteria designed to recognize past learning or experience while these were offered by only 30% of social work schools. While the numbers used in this analysis were small (N=28), the trends observed are consistent with the results highlighted in the qualitative data.

Table 3 summarizes the regular and special features of the 7 departments/schools whose directors were interviewed for this study. The data in table 3 come mainly from analysis of programme description material. A number of features stand out when social work schools are compared to adult education departments. Adult education departments have 4 or 5 adaptations regardless of the university they are affiliated with, whereas most schools of social work in traditional universities limit adaptations to evening courses and part-time study. Adult education programmes are concentrated at the graduate level, whereas the schools of social work offer both levels. This means adult education professors have smaller classes but a higher graduate supervision load, and they are not coping with professional certification issues (accreditation) which are a major constraint in social work. The requirement of field placement(s) is a problem for schools of social work, although some have managed to turn this to adult students' advantage. Innovative field work strategies include allowing special projects with outside supervision at the student's workplace, and giving partial or full credit for professional experience in lieu of field placement.

Responding to MR students: Adaptations and obstacles

Interviews with the 7 directors highlighted the range of adaptations made, why they came about and factors facilitating and hindering responsiveness. All of the sampled departments/schools offer traditional programmes, except one whose programme is available only through a distance format. All offer part-time study and some evening, summer or intensive courses within the regular degree programmes. Five of the 7 also offer one or more programmes targeting a specific group, such as a diploma/certificate for experienced adult education or community workers, and a degree for First Nations students given on the reserve.

Six of the schools/departments offer or once offered distance education. Three main types emerged from the data. Satellite centres distant from the main campus provide courses either through the "flying professor" model or by using local instructors. Although nearly half the schools/departments have used this model, $^2/_3$ were forced to close the centres because of high cost, low enrollment or difficulty attracting and keeping competent personnel. The 2 other types of distance education rely primarily on correspondence. Two of the departments/schools have correspondence programmes, supported by telephone contacts and some face-to-face contact. Two others provide the opportunity for students to take some distance courses although the majority of credits must be taken on campus. In several schools of social work, distance students can do field placements locally rather than on campus. Two schools were in the long and complicated process of planning distance Master's degrees.

Even those schools and departments whose adaptations are more limited have made some attempt to increase the flexibility of their programmes, policies, practices and course content. Most offer a considerable number of courses in the summer semester or in the evening while nearly half offer intensive courses. Many courses allow flexibility in timing and type of assignments, and some schools/departments allow students to move back and forth between distance and campus programmes or between part and full-time study. However, some departments and schools go beyond this beginning flexibility. Two adapted social work schools and 3 departments of adult education have formal procedures for assessing prior learning and granting credit for experience or proven competency. Two of the adapted departments/schools have other institutionalized practices to support MR students, such as hiring personnel to help them in administrative matters.

Over half of the directors noted the importance of providing adequate academic support for MR students. Ensuring students got a clear, realistic orientation and having professors provide detailed feedback on written work are two ways this support was built in. Other supportive measures were designed to facilitative peer helping. They included encouraging students to form networks and sending distance students newsletters to reduce isolation and maintain motivation. All of these supports were mentioned either by adult education departments or adapted social work schools.

Directors were asked why they made adaptations, what helped and what hindered the development of new responses to MR students. The impetus to adapt usually comes either from the students or from outside the department. Student demands are often made on an informal basis, either to the director (in smaller departments) or through feedback and discussions with "sympathetic and understanding faculty". While accommodations by the latter help many individuals, not all faculty are responsive and some problems beyond individual professors' control require departmental policy changes. About half the directors

received formal requests from students, around such issues as ensuring part-time students are represented on the departmental assembly. Tangible indices of unmet needs, such as high drop out rates or low registration by certain student populations, signal to directors that changes are needed. In a few cases, requests for special programmes are initiated by interest groups such as employers or professional associations, or by officials highly placed in the university system.

External support plays a key role in allowing departments and schools to respond to special needs of groups such as MR students. This support can take several forms. First, support can be offered indirectly through political influence or contacts with powerful government officials or university administrators. Some directors in smaller universities were able to make use of informal contacts, cultivated by faculty who had gained credibility in the university community. Other directors invoked the tradition of the university: "there's a mission of this university which is to try and respond to the needs of students in rural communities". And nothing succeeds like success; when a programme attracts students and gives the university a good name, it survives.

Financial support was the second key to success, especially in the case of intensive, satellite and distance programmes which must have adequate resources to function effectively. Often, material resources are an expression of university or government commitment, for example, to ensuring rural social workers are adequately trained or that native communities are equipped to administer their own child welfare programmes. Absence of financial support can kill a programme, no matter how innovative and relevant it may be. Schools of social work located in traditional universities are particularly vulnerable in this respect, perhaps because outreach is not seen as part of their mandate or that of the university. Several schools were forced to close satellite centres deemed too costly by their universities because of high initial costs and low student enrolment. Other university level obstacles included rigid regulations, such as time limits for degree completion or rules about minimum number of hours of student-professor contact. In addition, some universities do not allow local students to register in distance courses, even though they might have trouble attending classes because of caring for pre-school children or elderly relatives.

Some directors manages to get around many of these restrictions. An adult education department and a school of social work, located in two different traditional universities, were both successful in this regard. One director offered responsive programmes but told the university as little as possible; the other said "it's best not to ask for a clarification of a regulation, as they'll clarify it in the most restrictive way they can".

There can be some resistance within the school or department, particularly those with a traditional focus. Four of the seven directors mentioned difficulties getting professors to teach evening or summer courses, probably because of professors' own multiple roles or because university pressure to conduct research makes summer teaching risky. Departments and schools with satellite centres had trouble attracting highly competent personnel. Other directors mentioned obstacles arising from the special arrangements required by part-time, intensive and satellite programmes. Time conflicts arose where a professor had a regular class scheduled simultaneously with an intensive or satellite class, classrooms were not always available for intensive sessions, and "regular" students disliked evening classes set up for part-timers. In addition, adapted programmes required time (recognizing prior learning) or inconvenience (making services available outside office hours) which were not always accepted in traditional schools/departments.

Multiple Role Women Students and the Workplace: Findings from interviews with employers

Limited interviewing was done with employers of adult educators and social workers. Five employers were included in this contrast sample drawn from English and French organizations in two Canadian regions. Two employ adult educators, two hire mainly social workers while the other employs both. One employer is a large private company, two are provincial government departments and the other two are public social agencies of different sizes. The respondents were asked primarily about their policies and practices regarding continuing education, including university study for credit. Attempts were made to gather data on commitment to continuing education of various types, satisfaction with policies and practices, factors helping and hindering support for employee-students and perceptions of MR students. While the results presented here cover a diversity of views, practices and policies, they must be regarded as highly exploratory because of the small sample size. For the same reason, practices and policies of different types of employers could not be compared.

Employers were asked about their general continuing education policies and practices as well as the specific situation of employees studying in universities. Employers were strongly in favour of continuing education for employees, and had developed a variety of formal policies and informal practices. Continuing education was viewed mainly as a response to changing organizational needs. Goals included updating knowledge, responding to a new client populations (such as immigrants) or preparing for technological change (learning to use computers). In an effort to control costs, ensure that learning is directly related to organizational need and that a large number of employees benefit, much of the learning is offered by and in the workplace.

The actual financial commitment varied widely from one employer to another. For example, workers were offered between 2.5 to 5 days of paid educational time per year, and the amount spent on education ranged from very low to high. While size of the organization was clearly one factor, importance accorded to education and access to resources were others. One employer offered on the job training in workplace learning centres to over 2 000 employees per year. Employers were most favourable to continuing education when it took place in the workplace, in the form of short courses on content deemed necessary or desirable for promoting and maintaining high quality work.

There was less enthusiastic support for workers returning to university study. Only one employer had taken the initiative of developing a policy and a special programme in conjunction with several universities. This programme, designed to provide basic professional training for social workers in remote areas, was possible only because of the unflagging support of the minister, the availability of resources and the involvement of the professional association. In other cases, however, ministerial policies can act as obstacles. Two employers were unable to help workers who wished to return to university because supporting those seeking a degree was prohibited.

Several other factors made it difficult to free workers for university study. These included collective agreements, high costs, problems related to replacing key employees and the difficult economic climate. As a result, relatively little support was offered and very few workers were involved in university-based learning. One employer estimated that only 10 workers were university students, while 2 000 were involved in on-the-job learning. The initiative to return to university study was usually taken by the student, who then had to jump a number of hurdles before his/her educational project was approved. Some

employers had specific policies (such as paying tuition fees for all courses successfully completed), while others treated each case individually on an ad-hoc basis. When university study was initiated by the employer, it was usually part of a programme set up to meet specific medium or long term organizational goals.

The decision to support a worker's initiative to return to university was influenced by several factors. Workers were seen as having varied reasons for studying. Most sought a career change or mobility within the organization, others needed the professional recognition a degree would bring and still others were seeking mainly personal satisfaction. Employers were inclined to support those seeking to increase mobility within the organization through bettering their education , but were reluctant to support those who might leave after completing their degree. Several employers pointed out that the employee who wanted support while studying needed to be "a good investment", whose education would benefit the organization for several years. Some employers require employees to stay for a specific period of time following degree completion or reimburse any financial support received. Employers tend to provide more support for university learning when there is a lack of personnel with a particular degree, when the worker lacks an undergraduate degree or when a relevant career change is planned. The employee's status is also considered, with permanent employees more likely to get support.

The type and amount of support varies from one workplace to another. Affective support such as advice and encouragement was mentioned by four of the 5 employers. However, actual affective support received may reflect colleagues' and supervisors estimations of the benefits they will receive from the specific learning project. Some employees were encouraged to do projects on work-related problems to enhance direct benefits to the workplace. Jealousy does sometimes occur, as was noted by some of the students. Instrumental support takes several forms. Flexibility in hours worked is a major way some organizations facilitate university study. Three of the employers allowed worker-students to reorganize their work so that they could attend classes. The other two found this practice too disruptive, so students had to attend classes outside regular working hours. Sometimes, flexible hours were arranged informally through exchanges with colleagues with the tacit approval of supervisors. Only one employer allowed employees to attend classes on paid work time.

Four of the 5 employers allowed some form of medium to long term leave, but only two had paid leave policies. A third abandonned its policy of paid leave because employees tended to quit after completing their degrees. The extent of financial support varied widely from no support to paying virtually all costs, provided the employee "repaid" through several years of post-degree service. Between these two extremes, the employers offered to cover various costs such as books and tuition fees. The more the educational goals and programme were determined by the employer, the more the latter was willing to bear the cost.

Employers were relatively satisfied with the support they provided, as their policies and practices allowed them to respond to most educational needs. However, they would have liked a larger budget and simpler methods of administering the policies. In addition, they felt their policies and practices were not well known by employees. Three of the 5 employers felt workers were relatively satisfied with their organization's policies and practices, although dissatisfaction erupted if the latter were not applied justly. The employers would like to increase cooperation with universities, professional associations and other organizations to minimize duplication and maximize use of resources.

They seemed aware, however, that the support they offered was not enough to make studying while working easy, particularly for parents. They saw these workers as determined people who had to strive to succeed despite the conflict between all their roles. Some women were dissauded by all these obstacles from returning to study or seeking promotion. As one employer noted: "Many people who work for me would be really interested in studying but they say it's not worth a divorce".

The employer data, while limited in quantity, appear to confirm the literature available on workplace support for learning. There is a positive attitude towards continuing education, but actual financial support seems to be granted at the pleasure of the employer (Thomas, 1983). In addition, the employers offered much more support for in-house education than for university-based study, as suggested by Scanlan & Darkenwald (1984). While workers studying in areas seen as highly relevant to the workplace receive some support, it is the students who usually bear the brunt of the burden of combining work and study. This situation discourages many learners from returning to university, as suggested by Blais et al (1989).

Conclusions

In spite of the small sample, three tentative conclusions can be drawn from this exploratory study. The first concerns the experience of multiple role students. Women juggling two or three roles are here to stay and their numbers are increasing. They can bring many benefits to both the university and the workplace, because of their motivation, life experience and coping skills. But they are learning in difficult circumstances and face many situational and institutional obstacles which lead to role strain, overload, conflict and contagion. They need special support if they are to succeed in spite of the obstacles.

The second conclusion deals with responsiveness. This study suggests that responsiveness is comprised of three key ingredients: understanding, flexibility and commitment. Universities and employers need to understand MR students' difficult situations, recognize their strengths and take their needs seriously. These stakeholders need to be flexible in interpreting regulations, planning policy and schedules and making exceptions for temporary crises. Finally, they need to express their commitment by developing adapted programmes and policies, as well as providing adequate material support.

The third conclusion concerns availibility of support. These women have affective and instrumental support which helps them cope. However, much of it is obtained informally from family, peers, individual professors or work colleagues. Many university departments/schools and some workplaces offer "pockets of understanding" along with some flexibility in the form of part-time or evening study, flextime or unpaid leave. However, there is relatively little evidence of institutional commitment as expressed in highly adapted university programmes or paid educational leave. Commitment is higher in adult education departments and in a few "adapted" schools of social work.

The various stakeholders are increasingly aware of the need to provide more special support for multiple role students, but are often unable to "totally respond". Obstacles to responsiveness include faculty multiple role situations, university reward systems, outdated student stereotypes, budget constraints and the pressure for employers to support only learning which is directly related to organizational needs. However, some rare joint

university-employer initiatives show the benefits of a partnership approach to supporting non-traditional students.

This study suggests that despite new sensitivity to multiple role students, actual policy and practice still treats the family, the university and the workplace as separate worlds. Further research needs to be done to verify the findings of this study, and to identify which specific workplace and university supports reduce role strain in multiple role women.

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